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## THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE BRITISH TRAVELER IN AMERICA

**T**HERE has been a general belief in the United States that British writers and reviewers in the earlier years of the last century found the keenest satisfaction in malicious attacks upon anything American, that magazines and books were filled with the reproach of America, indeed that hatred of America so filled England that men deliberately journeyed to the new world to find new bases upon which to report the condemnation of the United States. Tradition has gone even further than to ascribe malice and intentional injustice to the writers, and asserts that British ministers actually hired travelers to scour the United States for unsavory tales of corruption and brutality.

It is difficult to believe that an intelligent American public, sensitive as it undoubtedly was, self-conscious and vain as is a new nation, could really have believed so preposterous a statement as this last. Yet there were many who gave credence to the charge, and, amazing as it is, there are men today who accept it. The belief is current, apparently, that, not only for forty years did the British traveler and writer systematically ridicule and abuse the American nation and people, but that the British government actually subsidized agents for that express purpose.

In Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge's *One Hundred Years of Peace* the writer says there was, for years, systematic defamation of the United States and that, to the English critic "everything in the United States was anathema." For confirmation of this broad charge Mr. Lodge refers his curious readers to McMaster's vivid description in his chapter on "British Criticism of the United States." The showing of McMaster's entertaining chapter on the period is hardly sufficient ground upon which to base so large a conclusion, even though one go back of McMaster to the English reviews so violently condemned. However consistent the prejudice of the reviewer of any volume of

travel, the actual unfairness of presentation should be evident in the volume reviewed. If the reviewer chose to distort or misrepresent a volume of travels, he has only done what reviewers before and since have done, most unjustifiably of course. There is undeniable evidence that such distortion did frequently occur, and the magazine itself may be held responsible for the false impression created. The real responsibility, however, for basic statement and correct information must lie upon the British traveler himself, and interest centers in his honesty, his capability and his point of view. A careful study of these travel volumes is the best refutation of charges of persistent dishonesty and malice.

In the years from 1810 to 1860 widespread British interest in the United States led scores of English travelers and writers to cross the Atlantic for the American tour. The average is rather better than one for each year and the resulting volumes number easily twice as many more. These volumes present reports and pictures of America widely differing; they vary from the deepest condemnation to the most unreasoning eulogy, and their conclusions are valuable only as the writer's status is established. The object of this present paper then, is to consider, not the picture presented, but rather the mental attitude of the writer when composing it. His conclusions are, of course, inevitably influenced by his social status, his political affiliations and his mental and moral prejudice. To a certain extent it is not impossible to classify English travelers in this regard. Taken individually, each author may be traced to his social, political, and intellectual environment; his reasons for writing may be discovered, and his judgment estimated in the light of such environment. Such detailed examination shows that the works of each ten-year period are characterized by a certain uniformity, and that the transition from one decade to another marks a corresponding change in British travelers. While there are always exceptions to such a statement, it is unquestionably true that the writers for each ten years form a natural group and that, for an explanation of such grouping, one must turn to industrial and political conditions in Great Britain.

In general it may be said of the writers that some were ab-

solutely open-minded, some were strongly biased, but few were either wilfully misleading or consciously insincere. Even the diametrically opposed findings of travelers of the same period show rather the opposed point of view than dishonest report. The books treated a score of topics of first importance to the English reader. Among these are slavery, political institutions, intemperance, American humor, manners and customs, hospitality, industrial and agricultural opportunity, education, poverty or the absence of poverty, American railways, and democracy in the working. It is to this last topic, both in its social and political aspect, that this paper turns in illustration of the traveler's changing point of view.

## I

The typical traveler of the first decade, 1810-1820, was the middle-class Englishman interested in agriculture, generally discontented with political conditions at home, commonly opposed to what he considered a petrified social order, and attracted to the United States by its lure of prosperity and content. The rewards of emigration, not for the laborer, but for the farmer and tradesman, inspired the work. The object of the author was to describe industrial opportunity, and especially agricultural opportunity and to do this in an honest and critical spirit. The books were without incident, attractive description, or literary merit, and there was very little examination or analysis of American institutions. They were rather a superior type of emigrant guide for a superior type of emigrant. Thus the writers from 1810 to 1820, with the exception of Faux,<sup>1</sup> do not dwell primarily upon the crudities of American life, nor upon its more unpleasant features. Flint, Hulme, Cobbett, Birkbeck, Fearon, Hall and Melish, all wrote of the emigration to America of the middle-class Englishman.

Melish,<sup>2</sup> a Scotch Whig, and later a resident in America,

<sup>1</sup> W. Faux. *Memorable Days in America*. London, 1823, 1 vol.

<sup>2</sup> John Melish. *Travels through the United States of America in the years 1806 and 1807 and 1809, 1810 and 1811, including an account of passages betwixt America and Britain, and travels through various parts of Britain, Ireland and Canada*. Philadelphia, 1812, 2 vols.

writes: "A republican finds here a Republic, and the only republic on the face of the earth that deserves the name, where all are under the protection of equal laws—of laws made by themselves." Lieut. Francis Hall<sup>1</sup> (1816–1817) is impressed with the universal interest in political institutions and claims that it "generates intelligence or a quick perception of utility, both general and individual." This observation, which is made in various forms by many later writers, both friendly and unfriendly, is in curious contrast with a sweeping characterization cited and condemned by Mr. Lodge: "The supreme felicity of a true born American is inaction of body and inanity of mind." Not even the most malicious and abusive of British travelers would have made a statement so obviously absurd. Hall also observes: "Laborers have not yet discovered the necessity of yielding 19 parts of their earnings to the government to take care of the remaining 20th."

Morris Birkbeck,<sup>2</sup> whose first book, *Notes on a Journey in America*, was followed by his *Letters from Illinois*, had established a colony of his countrymen at English Prairie, Illinois. A man of sufficient capital, he had expended some \$25,000 in removal to, and settlement in, his new home. His *Letters etc.*, intended primarily to induce further emigration from England, were so glowing in description and so unduly rich in promise, that they received the severest censure in both countries. Indeed his Illinois experience so prejudiced him in favor of all things American that his judgments are far from trustworthy. Writing of England he objected to "being ruled and taxed by people who had no more right to rule and tax us than consisted in the power of doing it." And of his adopted country he concludes: "I love the government. . . . And thus a new sensation is excited; it is like the development of a new faculty. I am become a patriot in my old age."

Fearon's *Sketches of America*, prefaced with the statement:

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. Francis Hall. *Travels in Canada and the United States in 1816–17*. London, 1818, 1 vol.

<sup>2</sup> Morris Birkbeck. *Notes on a journey in America, from the coast of Virginia to the territory of Illinois, with proposals for the establishment of a colony of English*. Philadelphia, 1817, 1 vol. *Letters from Illinois*. London, 1818, 1 vol.

"I have had every motive to speak what I thought the truth and none to conceal or pervert it," bear the stamp of intelligent and conscientious inquiry.<sup>1</sup> He came to America to report to thirty-nine families the outlook for a general American emigration. Until recalled to England, because publication of Birkbeck's volume had led many of the families interested to invest in the Illinois venture, Fearon wrote with painstaking care and unprejudiced pen. Vexed, however, at the demand for his return before completing his mission, and irritated that his friends should commit themselves to the Birkbeck colony, his reports betray increasing bias and irritation. Conceding that America is the "poor man's country," and that for the British laborer it is a desired haven, he affirms, in defiance of Birkbeck, that the farmer is but "scantly remunerated" and that "shop-keepers will do as well as in London but no better." In regard to government he says: "The principle of at least liberty is acknowledged and the fact of a free government exists."

Before passing on to the consideration of another decade it is worth while to read from the reputedly hostile *Edinburgh* of 1814 a prophecy in which we, living a century later, can hardly fail to find interest.

America is destined, at all events, to be a great and powerful nation. In less than a century she must have a population of at least 70 or 80 millions. . . . All these people will speak English, . . . will probably live under one government, whether republican or monarchical, and will be industrious, well educated and civilized. Within no very great distance of time . . . America will be one of the most powerful and important nations of the earth; and her friendship and commerce will be more valued than that of any European State.

## II

While the books of the second decade, 1820-1830, served indirectly to furnish the basis for McMaster's entertaining de-

<sup>1</sup>Henry Bradshaw Fearon. *Sketches of America*. A narrative of a journey of five thousand miles through the Eastern and Western States of America . . . with remarks on Mr. Birkbeck's "Notes" and "Letters." London, 1818, 1 vol.

scription in his "War of the Reviews," they apparently failed to receive first-hand examination from him. Many another reviewer has found in the book merely a peg to hang his own theories on and, with a few picturesque quotations, sacrificed the volume he would review to the effect he could produce. The books from 1810 to 1830, however they may have been exploited and misrepresented by reviewers, were surely not written for the attention and advertisement they might receive in the big Reviews. They were generally the work of men who were in earnest and who strove to make helpful suggestions and to answer definite questions. While the books of the first decade attempted this for men of ability and means, the interest for the second ten years was almost exclusively in the laboring classes.

More distressing than the political discontent of the farmers of the earlier period were the hardships and handicaps of the wage-earner in the twenties; and the books of the period are dedicated to some solution of their difficult problem. For the workingman at home, affairs were indeed critical. Farm laborers were losing their grazing rights, machinery was throwing the handicraftsman out of employment, the operation of the Poor Law contributed steadily to his increasing poverty, and the future offered nothing but misery.

The writers were either the more intelligent of the emigrants themselves, whose home letters were published, or were men imbued with radical and humanitarian sympathies who came to America to discover what promise the country offered to a poverty-stricken people. The emigrant wrote with a simplicity and directness that went straight to the understanding of the British laborers. He did not discuss liberty or democracy or society, but stated over and over again that he had good wages, was "one of the family" and that he had "three meat meals a day." Such testimony as is found in these books, as well as that in the bulky parliamentary report of Wilmot Horton's Committee on Emigration in 1826, all affirm the same truth, that in America the wage-earner need not fear starvation.

Although not quoted from any volume of the period, the following extract from a letter in the *Edinburgh Scotsman* in

March, 1823,<sup>1</sup> is exactly in line with the thought and expression of the decade.

I am here, lord and master of myself and of 100 acres of land—an improvable farm, little trouble to me, good society and a good market, and, I think, a fine climate, only a little too hot and dry in summer; the parson gets nothing from me; my state and road taxes and poor rates amount to \$25 per annum. I can carry a gun if I choose; I leave my door unlocked at night; and can get snuff for one cent an ounce or a little more.

Captain Basil Hall's<sup>2</sup> three volumes of 1829 mark the departure from the guidebook type, discovering material advantages, and the transition to the more discursive analytical books of the succeeding decade. Throughout the entire half-century no book of American travel was more widely read nor more generally commented upon than was this. None received greater popularity in England and none more exasperated the American public. A conscious superiority, a gracious toleration, an entertaining though superficial reasoning, and an admirable dignity that omits personal allusions, all are characteristic of Captain Hall's work. Claiming that he brought to America a mind not only "open to conviction" but prepared to admire, he expects for his adverse findings a readier credence. For adverse they are, indeed, in all their larger application; and in every line they betray the old Tory of the Twenties, fixed in his belief and convinced of the perfection and unalterableness of the British Constitution. This is his "point of view," not to be forgotten in using his work as historical evidence. Hall's analysis of the American system is not based on a real examination of the workings of that system but rather on what his theory leads him to think must be its workings. He says: "America has drifted from a Republic of representative men to as nearly a pure democracy as possible," and later: "My opinion now is that while each of our governments retains its present character, any closer intimacy between us is not likely

<sup>1</sup> Cited by *Nile's Register*, vol. xxv, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Basil Hall. *Travels in North America, 1827-1828*. London, 1829, 3 vols.



to spring up." His attitude and conviction are summed up in his quotation of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses of the thirty-eighth chapter of Ecclesiasticus, in the Apocrypha :

The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure : and he that hath little business shall become wise. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks?

### III

Captain Hall's work is the first of the distinctly critical type which characterized the period 1830-1840. The political crisis in England, with the Reform Bill of 1832, turned the minds of thinking men to a study of democracy and its demonstration in America. In this decade there is but one notable exception in the score and more of writers whose judgments are determined by political and social predilections in England. It is perhaps quite natural that the writers of the period should have been impelled to explain America according to the pros and cons of their adherence to the democratic theory; and it is true of the great majority that the volumes were expected to reach a political public and to preach a gospel.

All were not so frank in avowal as Captain Hamilton,<sup>1</sup> whose clear and entertaining volumes, *Men and Manners in America*, found so large a sale on both sides of the Atlantic. An army officer, a dyed-in-the-wool Tory, a facile writer, a valued magazine contributor, he states in his preface :

When I found the institutions and experiences of the United States deliberately quoted in the reformed parliament, as affording safe precedent for British legislation, and learned that the drivellers who uttered such nonsense, instead of encountering merited derision, were listened to with patience and approbation by men as ignorant as themselves, I certainly did feel that another work on America was wanted, and at once determined to undertake a task which inferior considerations would probably have induced me to decline.

<sup>1</sup> Captain Thomas Hamilton. *Men and Manners in America*. Edinburgh and London, 1833, 2 vols.

More moderate in tone and considerably more plausible were the statements of a Lincoln's Inn barrister, Godfrey Vigne,<sup>1</sup> who observes :

Were the present course of improvement to proceed without interruption from what the political economists call the disturbing causes—were luxury to be kept at a distance and a forced equality and contentment to be preserved by strong and universal exertion of the democratic principle—it would be demonstrable that the American constitution would last for centuries ; or in other words until the country became so thickly peopled as to be subject to the evils resulting to England and the other dynasties of Europe. If a democracy be the best form of government, it would follow that a surplus population, that unhappy proof of its excellence, would but be called the sooner into existence. Then will come the real moments of trial, whether a democracy can exist under the pressure of want—whether those that have anything to lose, would not be at the mercy of those who have not. . . . Whether, when such a state of things is apprehended, a standing armed force, be it called what it may, would not be necessary, not to put down foreign invasion, but to put down domestic contentions.

In recapitulation Vigne writes :

I advise you to go to America—at this period there is no country equally interesting, nor one so likely to remain so till it falls to pieces, probably within a half a century by its own weight. If you are an ultra Tory you will perhaps receive a lesson that will reduce you to reason—if you are a radical and in your senses as an Englishman and a gentleman you are certain of changing your opinions before you return.

This prophecy of the disintegration of the nation was constantly used by the enemies of reform in England, and indeed even the radicals at times feared that mere bulk would be America's undoing.

Henry Tudor,<sup>2</sup> a high-minded Englishman who had traveled widely, was another barrister who came to examine American

<sup>1</sup> Godfrey T. Vigne. *Six Months in America*. London, 1832, 2 vols.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Tudor. *Narrative of a Tour in North America comprising Mexico, the Mines of Real Del Monte, the United States, and the British Colonies; with an excursion to the Island of Cuba*. London, 1834, 2 vols.

institutions. A confessed friend of reform in England, he finds much in the United States to commend, but little applicable to the case at home. In his *Narrative of a Tour in North America*, he writes:

I feel bound to acknowledge from all that fell within my observation, that the present political establishment of the confederation seems to suit, in every respect, the genius and character of the people for whom it has been framed. . . . While, therefore as a Philanthropist, I wish every continued prosperity to those existing institutions, I cannot but most devoutly wish from the same motives and suitableness and national sympathy, that those of our own happy country may never be impaired or contaminated by democratic principles or alterations, and rejoicing as I do in the American republic I still more rejoice in the monarchy of England.

There is unquestionably a preponderance of Toryism in the books of the period; few were sufficiently radical to find in American institutions balm to remedy the ills in England. In the great majority of the volumes cited, democracy had been tried and found wanting—even the conservative approval of certain of its fruits was coupled with the warning that it would not bear transplanting.

Charles Augustus Murray,<sup>1</sup> however, makes no serious study of democracy, either to test or to arraign it. In his amiable study of American life, he quite detaches himself from his background, refraining from comparisons and ignoring the possibility that any American idea could be adapted to meet conditions in England. Master of the household for Queen Victoria and an eminently fair and kindly writer, he writes as a generous patrician, criticising with reluctance and finding always something to commend. He points to “two principal a-priori tests of the permanent prosperity of a nation . . . ; first, that every adult should be able to read and write; secondly, that every able-bodied man willing to work should find employment, at a rate of wage sufficient to insure him the necessaries of life.” Both these conditions, the writer affirms, are found in

<sup>1</sup> The Honorable Charles Augustus Murray. *Travels in North America during the years 1833, 1834, 1835 and 1836.* London, 1839, 2 vols.

America, though credit for so happy a condition is due not to democracy, but to opportunity.

The decade 1830-1840 is conspicuous in that it numbers among its travelers the great majority of really celebrated writers. In the entire half century of travel books, it is the rare exception that carries on its title page a name that means anything to posterity. There were, however, a few such, though they are rather outside the classification than of it. Were the books under consideration to be estimated with regard to influence, a first place would promptly be accorded Dickens *American Notes* (not, however, of the decade under discussion); and Mrs. Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* would also be near the top of the list. Though the *American Notes* rank first in the reading they received and in permanence as literature, they have no place really in a classification of writers regarding point of view or object. Neither indeed had Mrs. Trollope's<sup>1</sup> book in the thirties, wide as was also its sale, and great as was the American irritation at the volume. Harriet Martineau<sup>2</sup> and Captain Marryatt<sup>3</sup> were other bookmakers of the decade whose bookmaking was amply justified by earlier experience and success in writing, and whose volumes would have been read without regard to the interest in the subject. Miss Martineau's *Retrospect of Western Travel* succeeded her first *Society in America*, and it attempts to be a somewhat profound examination and analysis of America as she found it; her confessed sympathy with the cause of reform in England naturally leads her into the optimism she expresses. Of the United States Senate she writes:

I have seen no assembly of chosen men and no company of high born invested with the antique dignities of an antique realm half so imposing to the imagination as this collection of stout-souled, full-grown men, brought together on the ground of their supposed sufficiency to work out the will of their diverse constituencies.

<sup>1</sup> Frances Trollope. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. London, 1831, 2 vols.

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Martineau. *Society in America*. London and New York, 1837, 3 vols. *Retrospect of Western Travel*. London and New York, 1838, 3 vols.

<sup>3</sup> Captain Frederick Marryatt. *A Diary in America, with Remarks on its Institutions*. London, 1839, 1st ser., 3 vols; 2d ser., 3 vols.

Captain Marryatt, who writes because America has not been properly "done," scores Miss Martineau for her many inaccuracies, ridicules Mrs. Trollope and her claims, and proves himself less a critic of America than an enemy of democracy. Maintaining that the latter is synonymous with mob rule he says: "I candidly acknowledge that the Reviewer is right in his supposition; my great object has been to do serious injury to the cause of democracy."

#### IV

The definite alignment of writers in the decade just discussed, their championship of distinct political dogma, wholly distinguishes that period from the succeeding one. For the years 1840-1850 the volumes produced show a marked freedom from bias, a genuine, earnest questioning, a dispassionate survey of the real America. The books themselves are of strikingly high average—dignified, restrained, sincere. They are neither consciously amusing nor satirical, concerned with foibles and absurdities, nor are they mere excuses to carry political propaganda. For the ten years previous, American conditions had served to state the proposition for the British partisan. Practically all that had been written, emphatic as it was, was a mere repetition of foregone conclusions; judgments had been extreme, intemperate, tinged rather with feeling than with reason. Most books exhibited the writer's power of argument rather than his power of description or analysis. In the succeeding decade, almost for the first time, the real America, the truth at the bottom of these highly colored statements, seemed to inspire travelers. Home politics cease for a time to affect travelers' descriptions. It is a time of acute investigation and careful report directed less to governmental forms than to industrial and social conditions.

The most voluminous writer of the time was James Silk Buckingham,<sup>1</sup> one time member of Parliament for Stafford,

<sup>1</sup> James Silk Buckingham. *America: Historical, Statistic, and Descriptive, viz. : Northern States, 3 vols.; Eastern and Western States, 3 vols.; Southern or Slave States, 2 vols.; Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and other British Provinces in North America, 1 vol.; together 9 vols.* London, 1841-43.

journalist, temperance reformer and public lecturer, whose nine volumes, somewhat ponderous and dull, still present for the localities visited (and he covered most of the United States east of the Mississippi) a picture and a storehouse of fact not excelled by any other writer. He came, as he himself modestly announces, to correct all the errors of previous travelers. His tone is temperate, his attitude reasonably critical and his judgments wholly the result of inquiry and study. Of the country at large he concludes: "There are hardly any bounds to the expectations that may be formed of its future greatness, if wisely and discreetly governed and if kept from the great scourges of society—luxury, intemperance and war."

George Coombe,<sup>1</sup> writer on education, philosophy, and phrenology, though opposed to democracy on philosophical grounds, comments on "an extraordinary activity of all the faculties," which he says is a striking feature in American life. This he chooses to attribute to "the realization of political equality." As to personal preference Coombe expresses himself with a frankness that carries conviction of honesty.

I freely confess that while I lived under British institutions and enjoyed the advantages which they confer upon the upper and middle classes, I, like many others, had a less lively perception of their one-sided character. Even now, after contemplating the greatly superior condition of the masses in the United States, I am bound to state my conviction that this democracy in its present condition of imperfect instruction, is a rough instrument of government, and were I to consult my personal comfort merely, I should prefer to live in England.

Joseph Sturge,<sup>2</sup> philanthropist and abolitionist, after seeing much of the North and West, observes: "I do not think it out of place here to record my conviction that the great principle of popular control, which is carried out almost to its full extent in the free states, is not only beautiful in theory, but that it is found to work well in practise."

<sup>1</sup> George Coombe. *Notes on the United States of North America during a phrenological visit, 1838-9-40.* Edinburgh, 1841, 3 vols.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Sturge. *A Visit to the United States in 1841.* Boston, 1842, 2 vols.

Featherstonehaugh,<sup>1</sup> in a journey through the Slave states, bases convictions upon his investigations in the South, and his findings are completely at variance with those of the writer just quoted. The hopeful conclusions of Sturge were reached after a journey with Whittier through the northern and eastern States. The depressing pictures of Featherstonehaugh were painted after many unpleasant weeks spent largely on the western frontier of the slave states :

How instructive is this lesson to the other governments of Christendom. . . . The melancholy truth seems too apparent, that when a people reject the experiences of the past, cast aside the guidance of the wise and the virtuous, and commit their honor and prosperity to the tumultuous passions of the multitude, they are sure to descend in the scale of true civilization more rapidly than they rose.

Two English travelers, Kennedy<sup>2</sup> and Warburton,<sup>3</sup> the former an agent of his government in Texas, and the latter a traveler who approached the United States by way of Canada, are frankly startled by the power and progress of the country. Nothing in the books of the period is more interesting than Warburton's expression of incredulous astonishment in *Hochelaga*. He had planned a leisurely tour through British America and the United States, but, after completing the Canadian part of it and crossing the border into New York, he was so overwhelmed with the limitless possibilities of the New World that he cut short his further travels and returned hurriedly to England. Amazed at the energy, growth and prosperity of the country and alarmed at the anti-British feeling he found, he undertook in his hastily written book to arouse his countrymen, to open their eyes to the danger in the west. Whether Warburton overstates his own dismay, one cannot say; counting on the characteristic complacency of his countrymen, it may have seemed necessary to use exaggeration.

<sup>1</sup> George William Featherstonehaugh. *Excursion through the Slave States*. London, 1844.

<sup>2</sup> William Kennerly. *Texas: The Rise, Progress and Prospects of the Republic of Texas*. London, 1841, 2 vols.

<sup>3</sup> George Warburton. *Hochelaga; or England in the New World*. New York, 1846, 2 vols.

Most of the present generation have been brought up and lived in the idea that England is supreme in the congress of nations. I am one of that enormous class, long may it be a numerous one! But I say with sorrow that a doubt crosses my mind, and something more than a doubt that the giant son will soon tread on his parent's heels.

Almost morbidly he leaves in the reader's mind the fear "that they only wait for matured power to apply the incendiary torch of republicanism to the nations of Europe." Stirred as he is by the threat of this greater power, he yet clings to the consoling belief (almost an aphorism with British statesmen) that mere bulk would break the United States into fragments.

Many other writers could be cited whose acute observations are of very real historical interest. All bear out the generalization for the decade, that they are without political or commercial bias. Whenever it is necessary to discount the conclusions of a writer, it is a matter solely of the personal equation.

The last book of the period (again, a forerunner of the next) is Alexander Mackay's<sup>1</sup> *Western World*, which went through four British editions in 1850 and was reprinted in America. It was far and away the best book in description and analysis of America up to the time of Mr. Bryce's great work. Mackay's work resembles that of Basil Hall but is written from the opposite political viewpoint, that of an ardent radical. He was thoroughly alive to American crudities and vulgarities, but laughs with, rather than at, the Yankee who exhibits them. Maintaining that "England pays four and one-half times as much to be governed" as America, he asserts that the American system is wisely founded for

encouragement of virtue rather than the repression of vice. They repudiated a system founded on the principles of suspicion and resistance, and adopted one based upon those of confidence and encouragement. . . . They thus regarded education in its true light—not merely as something which should not be neglected, but as an indispensable coadjutor in the work of consolidating and promoting their schemes.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Mackay. *The Western World; or, Travels through the United States in 1846-47*. London, 1849, 3 vols.



In such sentiments one finds again the defence of democracy. Indeed, Mackay's book is an earnest justification of the principle. At the end of a decade of unbiased observation, once more appears this champion of a cause—and a champion of sound mettle.

Society in America started from the point to which society in Europe is only yet tending. The equality of men is, to this moment, its cornerstone . . . that which develops itself as the sympathy of class, becomes in America the general sentiment of society. . . . We present an imposing front to the world ; but let us tear the picture and look at the canvas. One out of every seven of us is a pauper. Every six Englishmen have, in addition to their other enormous burdens, to support a seventh between them, whose life is spent in consuming, but in adding nothing to the source of their common subsistence.

## V

As the half-century drew to its close, the mere observer in America disappeared. The books of the fifth period—from 1850 to 1860—return as in 1830–1840 to an examination of the institutions of America and a discussion of their value for Great Britain. A certain controversialism, an argumentative form, which betrayed the political missionary rather than the impartial traveler again mark the volumes. Once more, partisan feeling in England lessens the historical trustworthiness of the description. Although in the earlier period Tory influence and writing predominated, after 1850 the case was reversed and it was the over-zealous radical who was the offender. In spite of the intensity and zeal of the advocate, the books were of higher standard than in the early years. There was no longer a welcome or a reading for mere vituperation and ridicule. Writers of whatever tendency exhibited a certain general breadth in treating so-called American characteristics. As the facilities of travel improved, and the domain and power of the country increased, the British sightseer learned to discriminate between various local peculiarities and the national trademark he was prone to emphasize. Even the most earnest adherent of the old régime realized, with Mackay, that it was time “that portraiture succeeded caricature.” As already stated, Mackay

presented the best brief for democracy, though other travelers are not less ardent admirers of the American system. Baxter,<sup>1</sup> in his republished lectures at Dundee, says: "The American government is one of the most complicated yet ingenious and practically perfect that has ever been devised by the mind of man." In his enthusiasm he asserts the rise of the United States to be "the beginning of a new era in Government arrangements, the signal for despotic potentates to mark the advancing current in the stream of time."

And Phillippo,<sup>2</sup> an equally earnest sympathizer, after examining the effects of government on the people, remarks that "in a free country there is often much complaint with little suffering—in a despotism there is often much suffering with little complaint." The democratic principle, he maintains, "elevates the character and promotes the aspirations of the multitude—which gives freedom to subjects and stability to the state—makes masses endure adversity with higher courage and animates them in prosperity with a vigor never before equalled." Charles Mackay,<sup>3</sup> in song, poetry and after dinner speeches, outdid the American in laudation. In an eight months' lecturing tour, he covered much of the country and was most hospitably received. Indeed the warmth and kindness of his reception may have silenced all criticism, as it is said to have done for Thackeray. He made the journey, he says, to judge for himself "the results of the great experiment in self-government" in America, and he returned "with a greater respect for the people than when he first set foot upon the soil."

Among truly conservative writers were Sullivan, Chambers (the encyclopædist), Tremenheere and Senior, besides others of less importance.

Sullivan,<sup>4</sup> laboring heavily in his advocacy of Tory principles for Great Britain, writes:

<sup>1</sup> William Edward Baxter. *America and the Americans*. London, 1855, 1 vol.

<sup>2</sup> James Mursell Phillippo. *The United States and Cuba*. London, 1857, 1 vol.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Mackay. *Life and Liberty in America; or, Sketches of a Tour in the United States and Canada in 1857-8*. New York, 1857, 1 vol.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Sullivan. *Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America*. London, 1852, 1 vol.

I never had the slightest penchant for republics; I left England strongly biased in favour of our government and institutions, and I returned with all my predilections strengthened by a comparison with those of our cousins in the West.

Yet although such was my feeling, there is no denying that many of their institutions are admirable and far better suited to their habits and wants than any grafted from the old country could possibly have been; and, on the other hand, most unprejudiced Americans admit that though a republic such as they possess, organized as it was, carefully and deliberately, by the most clear-headed and enlightened men the country has ever produced and aided by the enthusiastic support of the entire nation, may suit their peculiar tastes and ideas, yet that it does not at all follow that it would succeed in England, where it would most probably be the handiwork of hot-headed zealots, acting in opposition to a large proportion of the people, and where it must inevitably rise on the ruins of a constitution which centuries have identified with us, and which has become endeared to a large majority of the nation by the blood and talents of its best and noblest, through succeeding generations.

His book carries no conviction, though he does make an occasional observation of interest. With regard to party distribution in America he notes the reverse of the English situation.

In England the stronghold of Democracy is in the large towns, and aristocracy has its strongest supporters in the country. In America the ultra-democrat and leveler is the western farmer, and the aristocratic tendency is most visible amongst the manufacturers and the merchants of the eastern cities. The Western States are destined to play an important part in the future of the Republic; already their influence is felt on all important occasions.

Tremenheere,<sup>1</sup> in a scholarly examination of the Constitution, admits its ingenious devices and commends the theory, but is convinced that in practice it has already "debased the government," and that such a result was inevitable. Satisfied that his condemnation is convincing, he bases upon it his argument against the extension of the franchise in England. Of the American as he finds him he writes:

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Seymour Tremeneheere. *The Constitution of the United States compared with Our Own.* London, 1854, 1 vol.

His sympathies are already with us ; we have but to acknowledge and respond to them. The violent and unscrupulous portion of the press in his country (the worst being conducted and inspired by renegades from ours) may, and doubtless does, produce a very different state of feeling and opinion in the numerical mass ; but the expanded hearts and minds of the educated, the reflecting, the cultivated, in their various degrees, are untrammelled by any such unworthy influences and meet us fully half-way in any demonstrations of genuine respect and fraternal recognition. But in equal measure do their spirits revolt against assumption. And all the more keenly in proportion to their desire to be understood aright, do they feel the unkind criticism, the overcolored description, or the repelling sneer.

Senior,<sup>1</sup> a professor of political economy at Oxford, writes primarily of the influence and success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in England. The gist of his book was first printed in the *Edinburgh*, where the writer's criticisms were strictly censored. The editorial reader so jealously guarded his pages from Senior's sharper criticism, that the article first appeared divested of much of its sting. Such treatment is of course in striking contrast with the years in which the review dealt largely in scoffs and jeers at America and is significant of an attitude of justice and consideration. In book form the writer permits himself the freedom of statement which the magazine denied him. Writing of the men in public service, he says :

What on this side the Atlantic are the prizes of public life, the high political and administrative posts, are generally left to the inferior men whose ignorance, violence or incapacity have led those who judge of America only through her public servants, to look on her with merited contempt and disgust.

The intolerance and arrogance of the British traveler, while on his tour, at all times and in the early years particularly, was a trial to Americans. They were constantly irritated by his condescension and egotism and indeed suffered under it. On

<sup>1</sup> Nassau William Senior. *American Slavery*: A reprint of an article on "Uncle Tom's Cabin," of which a portion was inserted in the 205th number of the *Edinburgh Review* ; and of Mr. Sumner's speech of the 19th and 20th of May, 1856, with a notice of the events which followed that speech. London, 1856, 1 vol.

the other hand, the vanity and bombast of the American, often a defensive armor, was merely amusing to the foreigner, and became a convenient target for ridicule. That conditions are changed is easily inferred from Senior's outburst:

We have long been smarting under the conceit of America—we are tired of hearing her boast that she is the freest and the most enlightened country that the world has ever seen. Our clergy hate her voluntary system, our Tories hate her democrats, our Whigs hate her parvenus, our radicals hate her litigiousness, her insolence and her ambitions.

From such quotations and others of the period it is evident that no hostility, and no criticism, is satisfied with contempt and derision. The strength of American institutions, their endurance, their possible application to conditions in other continents, have been too strongly felt. One may deny their virtues and hate them vigorously; one may applaud them sincerely or even blatantly; but one does not scorn or ignore them.

## VI

After 1860 such classification as this paper makes is impossible. Our own war and its aftermath brought questions which were peculiarly American and could have no bearing upon another nation. The Reform Bill of 1867 once accomplished in England, and nationality reestablished in America, the period of the investigating theorist was over. He had come in various guises: in the early years as an expert in immigration for the farmer, later as an industrial expert and philanthropist to seek asylum for the laborer; in the thirties to assure the British populace of the success or failure of democracy in the United States; in the forties to find the real facts of American life in the only broad unbiased outlook, and, last of all, to make a test of American institutions and their applicability in Great Britain.

Under all conditions America was the stage, her countrymen and her institutions were the players, the British public was the audience, and the British traveler the interpreter. For the five decades examined, the unity of presentation for each period is

of distinct historical importance. The individual picture is often misleading, it is the composite that is valuable. And yet of these various pictures of America, the composite they present can be fairly tested only in the light of the point of view of the artist. If the camera is focused to distort the image, as is easily possible—if it is so placed that the high lights illuminate the utterly unimportant things—or if, on the other hand, it is so advantageously placed as to flatter the object out of all resemblance to the original, then the composite itself is misleading. So again, the important thing is the point of view.

George Coombe in the preface to his volume in 1840 states well the difficulties of honest portraiture, and his preface may fittingly conclude the present paper.

I regard it as impossible for any individual accurately to describe a great nation. The objects and interests are so vast compared with the capacities of one mind, that a whole life would not suffice to attain to truth in all points of detail and to logical soundness in all inferences. A certain extent of error, therefore, is unavoidable on the part of all observers who attempt to delineate so extensive a field. The only method by which philosophic minds can arrive at truth in regard to national character and institutions, is to analyze and compare the reports of numerous observers; each individual author being regarded as a single witness in a vast and complicated cause.

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